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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000720

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [OPRC](#) [PARM](#) [AJ](#) [RU](#)  
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT SAYS PUTIN INITIATIVE  
COORDINATED WITH AZERBAIJAN "ONE TO TWO MONTHS AGO"

Classified By: CDA Donald Lu, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 8, Russian Embassy DCM Oleg Krokhin said that President Putin's proposal of U.S.-Russian cooperation at the Gabala radar station was discussed "one to two months ago" between Azerbaijan and Russia "at high levels," and had been "thoroughly worked out" beforehand. Krokhin, who had been intimately involved in Russia's negotiations over the Gabala station, said the agreement had a provision for third party involvement in Gabala given Azerbaijani consent. Saying that "everything that Putin said was true," Krokhin stressed that both Presidents had approved of this initiative, which was not directed against any one country but was rather designed to allow many countries to respond to emerging challenges within a multilateral system. Krokhin said that in the future European or other countries could also be brought into the arrangement. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) In a June 8 discussion with Poloff, Russian Embassy DCM Oleg Krokhin said that as head of the Russian Embassy's political section in Baku in 2001-2, he had been intimately involved in the bilateral negotiations that led to the January 2002 agreement allowing Russian use of the Gabala radar station. This 2002 agreement would be good for ten years, with an option to extend an additional five years.

PERMISSIBLE UNDER THE EXISTING LEASE AGREEMENT  
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¶3. (C) Concerning President Putin's proposal of joint U.S.-Russian use of Azerbaijan's Gabala radar station, Krokhin said that in the 2002 bilateral agreement there was a provision that allowed Russia to cooperate with other states at this site, as long as Azerbaijani agreed. (NOTE: Krokhin was unclear as to the exact nature of this cooperation, referring to it as "information-sharing" at one point and "third party involvement" at another). Krokhin stressed to Poloff two points concerning Putin's proposal:

- the existing bilateral agreement between Russia and Azerbaijan stipulates the right to bring in third countries to the site, with the agreement of both states, noting that when the agreement was being negotiated in 2001-02, the GOAJ didn't object at all to this clause.

- Azerbaijan is "ready and eager to cooperate" on U.S.-Russian Qabala cooperation; i.e., Azerbaijan fully supports this proposal. "Everything Putin said is true," Krokhin said.

WORKED OUT MONTHS AGO  
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¶4. (C) Concerning the genesis of this Russian initiative,

Krokhin said that it was discussed "one to two months ago" between Azerbaijan and Russia "at high levels" and was consistent with what Putin announced. As such, Putin's statement "was not unexpected," nor something "he just pulled out of his back pocket." Rather, Krokhin said that the idea had been "thoroughly worked out" beforehand by the two sides, finishing with a rhetorical "that is all I can say."

15. (C) Speculating on possible reaction to Putin's announcement, Krokhin said that although Azerbaijani oppositionists or others might speak out against the idea, the two Presidents had blessed it and so it could go forward. As for possible adverse regional reaction, to include Iran's reaction, Krokhin said "Tehran might not like the idea," but that it would realize that each state has a right to act individually or collectively in its own national interest. Furthermore, "this proposal is not about Iranian missiles or North Korean missiles" - it is about all three countries working together "to respond to new challenges" within a multilateral system.

16. (C) Krokhin stressed that the issue goes beyond that of bilateral relations; it is about forging a new global mechanism for meeting emerging challenges. In the future, European or other countries could also be brought into the cooperative framework. If Russia, the U.S. and Azerbaijan agree, this cooperation at Gabala will be a strong message to the international community that there is a system protecting the local and regional area, and that weapons can no longer influence the political process. Such cooperation could "turn around" the strategic situation regionally.

BUT IT WILL COST YOU

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17. (C) Saying that he was "not beginning negotiations" but merely giving his personal opinion, Krokhin added that should the U.S. agree to Putin's initiative, "partners should share costs." As to how the agreement would be worked out, he said that "if the political will is there" among the three countries, "all other issues can be worked out."

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